

Strategy S-7: Community Mobility

Improve community mobility options through increase in service levels on existing routes or through the creation of new services in transit-supportive higher household and/or employment density areas. Within each subarea, develop service proposals to serve residential and employment areas with the highest ridership demand and to promote circulation within communities. In the communities where flexible service and other King County Metro mobility products and services connecting to the all-day service network can be provided more cost-effectively than fixed-route service, those services should be expanded in conjunction with modifications and improvements to the existing system.

Aside from core routes and peak services, King County Metro provides a network of local transit routes that provide broader service coverage and connect neighborhoods to nearby activity centers. The effectiveness of fixed-route transit in attracting local trips is dependent on several factors, including population and employment density, the design of the street and sidewalk grid, and the number of common destinations people want access to. Typically, fixed-route transit serves trips better in urban areas where people and destinations are more concentrated.

In lower density areas where people and destinations are more dispersed, fixed route service is often difficult and expensive to provide. In some areas of the county fixed-route service is impractical because the street network does not allow a non-circuitous transit pathway, or because a lack of pedestrian connections makes transit access difficult. Alternative public transportation options, such as flexible local bus service, vanpooling services or carpooling services often provide a more cost-effective method to serve low-density areas.

Strategy S-8: Specialized Transportation Services

Provide complementary paratransit services that comply with federal regulations to people who have disabilities that prevent use of regular public transportation in the service area shown in Exhibit 4-8.

Develop cost-effective alternatives to supplement federally mandated paratransit service and to provide transportation services to persons who are transportation-disadvantaged due to age, disability or income within King County. Explore ways to include paratransit-eligible persons and other persons with disabilities and seniors on mobility services available to the general public, such as vanpools.

The federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 mandated that public transit agencies make transportation services for the general public accessible to persons with disabilities as well as provide “complementary paratransit” service for those whose disability prevents use of the fixed route service some or all of the time.

In 1999, King County Ordinance 13441 defined two programs: The ADA Paratransit Program and the King County Community Transportation Program (KCCTP).

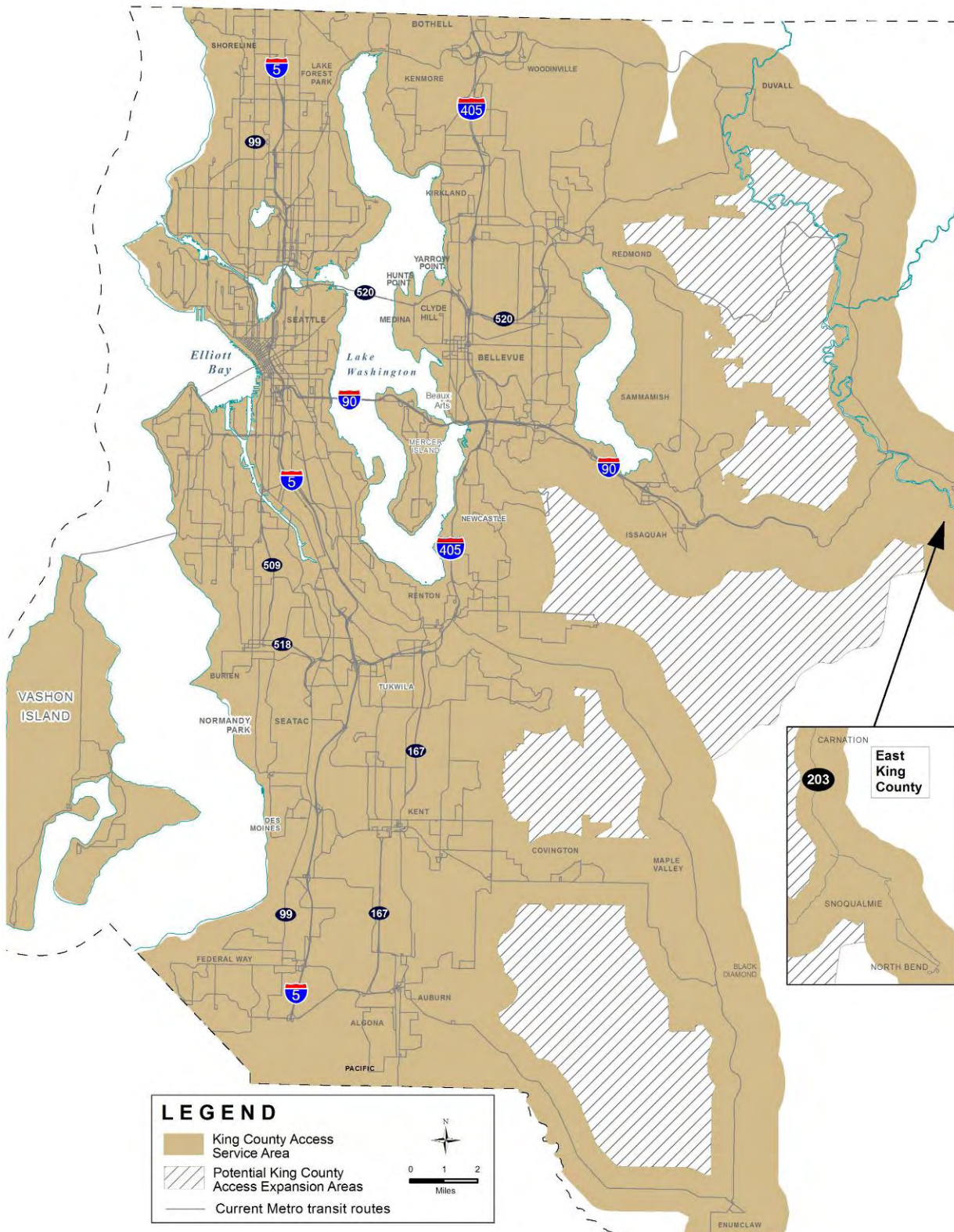
ADA Paratransit Program

The ADA Paratransit Program, also called *Access* Transportation, contains those minimum elements required of a complementary paratransit program by federal regulations. This service must be comparable to non-commuter, fixed route service for the general public in several ways, including service area, response time and fares. The program serves persons who are unable due to a disability to use accessible non-commuter, fixed route transit service some or all of the time.

Because the ADA paratransit program is tied to transit availability and service levels, “islands” have existed where *Access* service has not been available. *Transit Now* includes funds to extend service to these areas, shown in Exhibit 4-8.

A registration process evaluates under what conditions the applicant’s disability prevents use of regular bus service. An eligible individual can be ‘fully’ eligible for all rides or ‘conditionally’ eligible, meaning they qualify for a rider only when certain conditions exist. Regional agreements extend ADA-eligibility to neighboring counties. Private contractors operate the call center and use vehicles owned by King County.

Exhibit 4-8 Specialized Transportation Service Areas



King County Community Transportation Program

The King County Community Transportation Program provides service that supplements the ADA Paratransit Program, as well as additional services for persons who are transportation disadvantaged due to age, disability or income, whether or not they are registered for the ADA Paratransit Program. Program components include:

- **ADA Paratransit Program** enhancements for ADA-eligible riders that exceed federally-required minimum service criteria, such as subscription service for recurring trips, limited door-to-door and hand-to-hand service, and an expanded weekday service area;
- The **Taxi Scrip program** which provides subsidized taxi scrip to low-income King County resident who are ages 18 to 64 and have a disability or who are 65 and older;
- **Bus travel training**, volunteer transportation and transportation information and referral.
- The **Community Access Transportation (CAT) Program**, which provides transportation options for seniors and people with disabilities. The program provides lift-equipped vans and small operating grants to agencies that serve seniors and those with disabilities.

Service Enhancements

Between 2002 and 2007, King County Metro implemented the following service improvements, technology enhancements and other initiatives:

- Implementing a more comprehensive eligibility process, including referring a greater percentage of applicants for an in-person evaluation of their ability to perform the tasks needed to ride the bus and re-certifying active riders every three years;
- Applying conditions of eligibility to routine trips. A ‘path of travel’ review is conducted to determine if there are any barriers that will prevent the rider from taking the specific trip by bus. King County Metro has received national recognition for the design and effectiveness of this process;
- Installing Mobile Data Terminals (MDT’s) on all Access vehicles and support infrastructure in the dispatch center. The MDT’s are equipped with Global Positioning Systems, digital text and voice communication and on-board

- Increasing the availability of bus travel training to teach paratransit riders the skills needed to ride the bus. State grant funds have supplemented this effort;
- Providing high-quality retired King County Metro vans, as well as new vans, to non-profit agencies and local government entities to provide program-specific transportation to seniors and people with disabilities. A specific number of ADA-eligible rides must be provided. As of 2006, 47 vans have been provided to 20 eligible entities; an estimated 129,500 rides will be provided annually, with 40 percent going to *Access*-eligible riders.
- Implementing a one-year Wheelchair Accessible Taxicab demonstration project in 2007 to evaluate the demand for accessible taxis within the county. King County Metro, the King County Licensing Division and the City of Seattle were partners in the project, which may be extended through 2008. A more permanent solution may be in place by 2009.

During the 10-year plan 2007-2016, King County Metro will continue to invest in technology to increase the efficiency and reliability of *Access* service while also supporting better connections with fixed route service and increased community transportation options. These changes are anticipated to occur over the next six years:

- As part of *Transit Now*, *Access* service will be provided on weekdays during the midday in several rural areas of the county that are not currently served, as shown in Exhibit 4-8.
- King County Metro will continue to refine the ADA-paratransit eligibility process to more accurately evaluate each applicant's level of eligibility while educating applicants and their support systems (family, caregivers, etc.) about other community transportation options;
- Investment in technology solutions to improve paratransit efficiency and timeliness will continue;
- Also, starting in 2007, the Community Access Transportation (CAT) program will provide additional vans over 4 years to eligible entities. By 2010, over 75 CAT vans will be in service. By 2013, this program is projected to carry 184,400 trips annually at less than the average cost of an *Access* ride.

Strategy S-9: Partnerships

Develop partnerships with local jurisdictions, employers and institutions to increase public transportation services and improve service effectiveness.

- **Transit Now partnerships:** Solicit and enter into partnership agreements with public or private entities to mutually fund new or improved transit services, where the partner contribution may be in the form of direct funding or investment that results in transit speed or reliability improvements. Dedicate a portion of new service hours for this purpose.
- **Commute partnerships:** Enter into partnerships to improve public transportation use and reduce single-occupant commuting by developing and promoting alternate commute programs; and by managing parking and traffic to make public transportation options more attractive.

Transit Now Partnerships

Transit Now partnerships are one of several ways in which service hours will be added as part of the *Transit Now* package. These partnerships provide an opportunity for King County Metro to work with public and private organizations to share the costs and responsibilities of providing additional transit service.

Two types of service partnerships are defined under *Transit Now*:

- **Direct financial participation:** Public and/or private partners will contribute one-third of the fully allocated cost of a new Metro Transit route or new service hours on an existing Metro Transit route for at least five years. King County will contribute the other two-thirds of the cost.
- **Speed and reliability partnerships:** One (or more) of 20 eligible cities commit to improving traffic operations on one or more Metro Transit RapidRide corridors or core service connections (see Exhibit 4-2 and 4-3) so that buses move at least 10 percent faster throughout the day. In return, King County Metro will increase bus service in the city by 5,000 annual hours for each route on that core connection that has gained and maintains a 10 percent transit speed improvement.

Transit Now allocates 90,000 annual transit service hours for these partnerships that will be phased between 2008 and 2013. King County Metro will select from among partnership proposals by potential partner entities. Final proposals for service partnerships are expected in late 2007.

King County ordinance 15756 directs that direct financial partnerships will have priority over speed and reliability partnerships, and establishes a set of criteria for prioritizing funding opportunities. The following pass-fail criteria for entering into *Transit Now* partnership agreements, in priority order:

1. The partnership service will improve access to, from or between designated Urban and Manufacturing Centers.
2. The partnership service will improve service on the network of core service connections as defined in Service Strategy S-3, which include RapidRide corridors.
3. The partnership service by a public agency will improve access and circulation within designated Urban and Manufacturing Centers or will provide service consistent with Service Strategy S-13. A circulator or ride-free service partnership with a public agency also will provide service in a manner that supports enhancement of existing transit centers by providing frequent connections between a transit center and major destinations within the urban center.
4. The partnership service will improve other services that support the goals and objectives of this strategic plan.
5. The partner or partners will commit to continue the partnership for more than five years.
6. The partner or partners will agree to fund more than the minimum one-third share of the fully allocated service cost.
7. The partner or partners will commit to implementation of additional actions that are likely to increase ridership on the new services, such as:
 - Conducting promotional activities,
 - Providing incentives to employees and riders,

- Establishing limits on parking supply or price for single occupant vehicle parking within the area served by the new service,
- Implementing parking management to increase the attractiveness of transit and ridesharing,
- Taking other policy actions that support the new service, or
- Taking other actions that are likely to increase ridership on the new services.

8. Projected ridership gain in annual boardings over the term of the agreement.

Proposals for speed and reliability partnerships that meet the eligibility requirements above will be evaluated according to the following criteria, in priority order:

1. The partner's capital investment or traffic operations change will create a transit speed and reliability benefit along a continuous RapidRide bus rapid transit corridor;
2. The partner will commit to additional traffic operations management actions that achieve transit priority in excess of the required projected ten percent travel time savings;
3. The improvements can be completed within five years; and
4. The partner will commit to provision of complementary actions that improve transit operations or ridership, such as:
 - Implementing innovative transit signal phases and timing,
 - Providing the infrastructure, preferably fiber, required to support communication between transit signal priority equipment in the field and from the field back to the applicable agency and to King County Metro,
 - Adding curb space for transit terminal or layover,
 - Establishing limits on parking supply or increasing prices for single occupant vehicle parking within the area served by the new service,
 - Implementing parking management to increase the attractiveness of ridesharing,
 - Implementing pass subsidy and promotional programs that achieve higher ridership, or
 - Taking actions that improve the pedestrian environment.

Commute Partnership Programs

Employers, educational institutions, and other organizations choose to participate in King County Metro commute partnerships for a number of reasons. These include managing limited parking supply and increasing parking costs, complying with requirements of the state Commute Trip Reduction Law, and providing a highly valued benefit to employees in the form of subsidies for alternative commuting. Many employers find the ease of participating in King County's commute partnership programs to be an effective means of reducing drive-alone trips.

Described below are some of the commute partnership programs that the King County King County Metro Market Development group is involved with:

- **Downtown Transportation Alliance (DTA):** a partnership between King County Metro, the City of Seattle and the Downtown Seattle Association. The DTA has set a goal to increase transit's share of downtown trips by 6 percentage points by 2015, and works on varied fronts including street operations, transit service improvements, parking management, building outreach, incentive programs and land use and parking regulation to reach this goal.
- **Construction Mitigation:** a partnership with the Washington State Department of Transportation to develop and implement mitigation strategies as part of major highway construction activities. Initial efforts on I-405 have included adding transit service, park-and-ride management and vanpool promotions.
- **Commute Trip Reduction:** partnerships with local jurisdictions to achieve their commute trip reduction goals, including support for the development of Growth and Transportation Efficiency Centers.
- **Residential Outreach and Incentives:** includes In Motion, a community-based program providing residents with incentives to try travel options and the Residential Transportation Coordinator program, providing transportation information to neighborhoods and populations with limited English skills.

Expanding the Public Transportation Market for Current Products

Historically, efforts focused on increasing ridership and participation by larger employers in funding employees' commuting by modes other than single occupant cars. However, much of the employer market remains untapped. The following will be pursued in order to reach new markets:

- Ensure the transition to Smartcard operations will provide customers attractive employee pass and incentive programs.
- Coordinate the definition and operating rules for implementation of the service partner program. Additional efforts include coordinating on the definition of RapidRide corridors, and facilitating future partnerships to support the new service in these corridors.
- Expand market outreach beyond major employers to smaller employers, developers and property managers.
- Continue to simplify the provision of mobility products and services and financial partnering packages.

Strategy S-10: Streetcar System

Consider opportunities for system integration when planning improvements to the existing King County streetcar line, identify the factors contributing to successful streetcar service and develop criteria to guide decisions to initiate or participate in future streetcar projects or, where necessary, to authorize other entities to provide streetcar service. Criteria should address land use, economic, environmental and social equity considerations along with transportation impacts and other factors.

Strategy S-11: Regional System Coordination

Work with the appropriate agencies to achieve integrated, cost-effective and efficient operation of public transportation services in King County addressing the needs of current and potential riders. Participate in transportation system planning efforts including state and regional projects of countywide significance to identify potential transit service and capital elements and funding.

King County Metro participates in ongoing coordination and planning with other agencies. King County Metro is active in the Transit Integration Group (TIG), a committee of the region's transit operators that coordinates policies, practices and services to provide a more consistent transit experience for customers traveling throughout the Puget Sound region. TIG committees coordinate service, fare payments, technology, service for transportation disadvantaged riders, and other matters.

Seven transportation agencies are collaborating to plan and implement a regional fare collection program which enables customers to use one fare card on multiple systems throughout the four county Central Puget Sound area. Smart card fare collection technology will be used to allow linked trips between transit, ferries and rail and to significantly expand each agency's strategic fare policy capabilities. Called the "One Regional Card for All" (ORCA) smart card, the new multi-agency fare media is expected to be introduced in 2008.

King County Metro also participates in local, regional and state projects to ensure that transit and roadway investments are coordinated and that transit customer and operation needs will be met as the roadway system is improved. The Puget Sound region is currently facing many potential transportation system changes, each of which is likely to impact transit service. Over the life of this strategic plan, changes in the transportation environment will require King County Metro to respond flexibly and to revise service to minimize impacts and maximize opportunities to improve service to customers. Responding to changes in the transit environment will be an important focus of the 2008 update to this strategic plan.

Some of the changes that will impact transit service include the following:

- The downtown Seattle transit tunnel will reopen in September 2007 when construction needed for future light rail is completed. King County Metro will adjust several routes serving downtown Seattle.
- Sound Transit's Link Light Rail is scheduled to begin operation between downtown Seattle and Sea-Tac Airport in 2009. Local routes, including some electric trolley routes will be changed to reduce redundant service and improve local feeder connections. King County Metro will begin joint bus-rail operation in the downtown Seattle tunnel.
- Sound Transit and the Regional Transportation Investment District (RTID) plan to place a measure on the November 2007 ballot that would initiate a major transit and freeway construction program. If it passes, King County Metro will need to adjust services to avoid construction impacts, and add new service to reduce construction traffic impacts.
- Major arterial and freeway projects are also in planning or design including the Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Project, State Route-520 bridge replacement and HOV project and construction projects on I-5 and I-405. Each has potential to change transit service and effectiveness in both positive and negative ways.

Other Coordination Efforts

In jurisdictions adjoining or straddling other counties, there is the challenge and opportunity to coordinate local services with other operators locally and in adjacent counties. Transfer facilities are provided in Auburn, Federal Way, Bothell, and Shoreline to integrate service between King County Metro, Sound Transit, Pierce Transit, Community Transit and other operators.

In order to encourage regional travel by rail and ferry, it is important that intermodal transfers be comfortable, convenient and safe. Bringing transit close to the facility reduces rider walk time while increasing service frequency and improving schedule coordination reduces rider wait time. Operating service reliably is also crucial.

Additionally, efforts are increasing at the state and local level to coordinate public transportation services for people who are transportation-disadvantaged due to age, income or disability.

Strategy S-12: Student Mobility

Ensure that the mobility requirements of student passengers are recognized on a par with those in school districts that choose to participate in Student Transit programs. Participating districts will reimburse King County for all student transit expenses.

King County Metro works with local school districts to meet student transportation needs. When school districts rely on public transit to transport students to school, increased demand for transit service is expected. King County Metro will review existing route capacity to determine if sufficient resources are available to serve the student population. If additional service is required, King County Metro will review existing services to determine if opportunities exist to reallocate hours to meet increased student trip needs. Improvements needed beyond what can be provided for by this strategic plan or through service consolidation can be made if school districts provide for the incremental expense, using a combination of direct payments or student pass subsidies.

As of 2007, King County Metro currently contracts for enhanced student transit services with the Bellevue and Mercer Island School Districts. The Lake Washington School District and Seattle School District have shifted some of their students to Metro Transit service. These services operate within the existing route structure. In the 2006-2007 school year, King County Metro operated pilot programs with five high schools in the Seattle school district. King County Metro plans to continue to provide service with these schools in the 2007-2008 school year. The Seattle school district continues to supplement Metro Transit service with several yellow bus routes to serve students.

Strategy S-13: Special Events

Work with private and public agencies to develop strategies for using public transportation services to offer alternatives to single-occupancy vehicle travel to special events. Strategies may include street use, transit priority, and other strategies under the jurisdiction of King County Metro or local governments.

King County Metro provides special service to multiple sporting events and other special events, such as Seattle Mariner and Seahawks games, the Seafair Hydroplane races and the Torchlight Parade. Overall program size depends on demand as well as the total

number of available service hours, established each year during the budget process. Specific activities are coordinated with individual event organizers and sponsors throughout the year.

In addition to services or fares subsidized by special event sponsors, King County Metro also regularly looks for opportunities to assign larger coaches or provide trips on routes that serve a special event in order to reduce traffic congestion and minimize impact to normal service. Examples include connections from the Northgate Park-and-Ride to major festivals such as the Bite of Seattle, Folklife and Bumbershoot. Adopted transit financial policies require recovery of 100 percent of the marginal operating costs of special service operations unless otherwise authorized by the Executive.

Strategy S-14: Activity Center Mobility

Enhance circulation within activity centers through changes in transit service design and other programs to encourage transit use including, but not limited to, proposals for consideration of ride free areas. Preserve existing revenues and encourage financial partnerships with others to cover additional expenses associated with the provision of new services and programs for this purpose.

Providing for circulation within activity centers extends the range of pedestrians and enhances livability of downtown areas. Streetcars, fixed route transit service, ridesharing, vanpool and *Access* services can all contribute to mobility within activity centers. Opportunities to improve circulation in activity centers will be a consideration when bus route changes are considered.

Expansion or Creation of New Ride-Free Areas

The issues and impacts associated with expansion or creation of new ride-free areas were evaluated in 2003. The 2003 analysis concluded that new ride-free areas in Seattle would not be viable without significant or costly changes to current fare collection methods. Others may be feasible, but should be assessed in comparison with other options that would accomplish the same objectives.

Expanded or new ride-free areas may be considered when:

- The likely mobility benefits outweigh impacts on existing riders and transit operators
- Routes do not serve more than one ride-free area
- Ability to understand the fare payment system will not be significantly reduced
- Consideration of all options shows that a ride free area will be the most effective
- Full incremental cost is borne by local jurisdiction or public-private partnership

Expanded or new ride free areas are more favorable when:

- Using all doors for loading will speed operation or reduce costs
- All transit agencies serving the area agree to participate
- Significant increase in transit use will result within the activity center

Shuttles and Circulators

King County Metro has had mixed experience with shuttles and circulators. Shuttles and circulators operated by King County Metro or in partnership with others have in some cases experienced low ridership and have failed to sustain partner financial participation.

Special routes that serve only a circulation function have been successful only in cases where they have been designed to do at least one thing well – they serve at least one demonstrable market need effectively. Ridership will be further enhanced if other travel needs can also be met without compromising this primary purpose.

Shuttles and circulators may be considered when:

- Services meet minimum productivity guidelines for regular transit routes
- Speed or design of regular transit service will be enhanced
- More expensive fixed-route service can be replaced or deferred
- VanShare and Flexcar options will not serve the same purpose at lower cost

Seattle's South Lake Union Streetcar is an example of an activity center circulation improvement King County Metro will provide in partnership with the City of Seattle. The new streetcar will provide service between Westlake Center and South Lake Union. Seattle has secured full funding for the capital cost and will provide full operating funding for an initial period, after which King County Metro will provide three-fourths of the operating cost and Seattle will provide for the remaining one-fourth. King County Metro's share of this cost will be reallocated from other West subarea services in conjunction with changes to achieve service integration with Link light rail in 2009.

Seattle's Waterfront Streetcar also provides circulation along the Alaskan Way waterfront. King County Metro, Seattle, and a private developer are working together to provide for a new maintenance base, and streetcar service is planned to restart when the maintenance base becomes available.

Other Options

Several other options are available to local jurisdictions interested in enhancing activity center circulation. Options to be considered as alternatives to ride-free areas and circulators include:

- A single route operated fare-free (with local funding replacing anticipated fare revenue)
- Broad application of employer transit pass incentives, making fares less of a barrier
- Residential pass programs
- Token programs providing transit fares to shoppers
- Shared-use parking programs that reduce auto trips between parking lots
- Pedestrian and bicycle improvements and incentive programs
- Privately-operated and funded shuttles and circulators using vans or taxis
- Parking for Vanshare vans at transportation terminals to shuttle commuters to worksites

Strategy S-15: Vanpooling and Ridesharing Services

Provide vanpool, vanshare and ridematch services; especially for trips that are not accessible or convenient by fixed-route transit service. Provide services to help form and maintain carpools and vanpools, and develop or promote other innovative and/or customized ridesharing services that provide alternatives to driving alone.

Transit Now also includes rideshare investments aimed at doubling the program from 2007-2016. Rideshare projects include:

- Van Technology Improvements - Identify and use technology to increase administrative efficiency, reduce vehicle-operating costs and minimize the amount of work required of volunteer commuter van drivers and bookkeepers.

- Van Distribution Center Improvements - Pave some or all of the remaining property at the Van Distribution Center in Redmond to provide additional stalls for vanpool vehicles as the program expands.
- Smaller Employer Support - Work with smaller and non-CTR-affected employers in King County to promote commuter vanpools
- Van Expansion Start-Up Support – Devote new resources to commuter vanpool rider recruitment and retention. Commuter van ridership not only increases with adding new customers, but can also be increased by retaining more existing customers.
- Simplification Strategies - Several elements have been identified to simplify and streamline current commuter van program practices. The first project to create an on-line training course for vanpool drivers and bookkeepers.
- Regional Fare Media Integration –Demonstration project that integrates vanpools with Sound Transit train and express bus service under the regional Puget Pass.